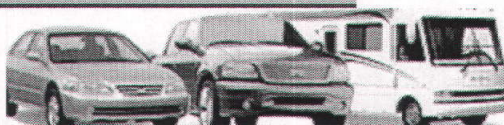


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## The Salt Lake Tribune

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Front Page

Contents

Past Editions

Search

Archives

Weather

TribTalk

Obituaries

Today's A-1

Help Desk

Marketplace

Auto Guide

Career Guide

Real Estate

RVs, Boats, etc.

Grocery Guru

Shopping Guide

Utah City Guide

Classifieds

Nation/World

Utah

Sports

Editorials

- Commentary

- Public Forum

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EMAIL

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Earth Day Award Nominees Go  
'Beyond the Call of Duty'By Mike Gorrell  
The Salt Lake Tribune

Co-op Mining Co. developed an aerial conveyor belt to remove coal from its Emery County mine without damaging a fragile wetland.

After acquiring a Box Elder County quarry, Northern Stone Supply owner Gary Mullard spent more than \$500,000 cleaning a mountain of waste rock left from decades of previous mining. The cleanup restored a stretch of stream now being used by Bonneville cutthroat trout.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management took a lead position in a joint federal-state effort to go into Cottonwood Wash in San Juan County, conduct surveys on issues from bat populations to cultural resources, and to seal hundreds of abandoned mine portals and drill holes.

All three projects have been nominated for Earth Day awards presented annually by the Utah Board of Oil, Gas and Mining.

"The board likes to recognize operations that go above and beyond the call of duty, good work done by people in the mining, oil and gas industries," division director Lowell Braxton said. "These were some of the best [nominations] I've seen."

Awards will be presented to one or more at the board's April 30 meeting.

Co-Op Mining started developing new tunnels in 1998 for its Bear Canyon Mine near the base of Huntington Canyon.

Division reclamation biologist Susan White noted that the company cut these portal entries beneath a dominant sandstone ridge to minimize surface

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disturbance, but faced a bigger challenge installing a coal-carrying conveyor belt across a wetland watered by hillside seepage and an ephemeral stream. The wetland was home to several types of wildflowers, most notably a columbine subspecies.

"Co-Op recognized the importance of this

seep. The division didn't have to tell them not to disturb it," she added.

The company avoided the wetland by suspending the conveyor belt from cables hung over the canyon. Crews assembled the belt in the air and enclosed it to prevent dust from being blown into the environment, said Co-Op Mining engineer Charles Reynolds.

Coming out of Oakley, Idaho, Northern Stone acquired the Turquoise Stone Quarry in 1992 and has been excavating a green-shaded quartzite from the site in Park Valley.

Division reclamation specialist Lynn Kunzler said Northern Stone owner Gary Mullard did not feel a pile of waste rock dumped into Rock Canyon since the 1950s reflected well on his company, especially since it buried a perennial stream.

So he found ways to dispose of the waste rock and installed a culvert to restore the stream flow. As a result, upstream populations of relatively rare Bonneville cutthroat trout "have moved back down and can be seen now on the site where restoration has occurred," Kunzler said.

The Cottonwood Wash project combined the resources of the BLM, Forest Service, Utah Division of Water Quality and the division's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program on a complex fix-up project that covered 143,000 acres of desert canyonlands ranging in elevation from 4,500 feet to 9,500 feet.

Uranium mining had impacted water quality in the semi-arid wash and left behind waste piles and unprotected openings to potentially dangerous mine shafts and tunnels.

Nominator Mark Mesch of the division's Abandoned Mine program said BLM led the way in helping the agencies overcome structural differences to cooperate on a program that sealed 122 mine portals, 24 vertical shafts, 200 drill holes, reclaimed five miles of roads, removed 61,000 cubic yards of dirt and reseeded 124 acres of disturbed lands.

The team also did radiological and water quality studies, documented prehistoric and historic cultural resources, surveyed bat populations and

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produced a number of reports on the area's assets and characteristics. "The partnership," said Mesch, "let us look at the whole watershed in a more holistic way."

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